

County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health



GETTING THE FACTS ON TRANS FAT!

What is trans fat?

- A type of fat formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats (shortening and hard margarine)
- A small amount is found naturally in some animal-based foods
- Trans fats are made when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil (hydrogenation process) to increase shelf life and flavor stability of foods

What are problems associated with trans fat?

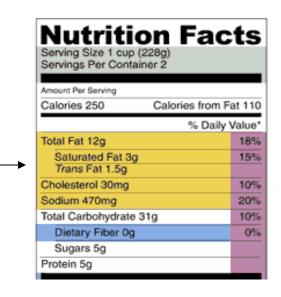
- They raise low-density lipoprotein (LDL or bad) cholesterol that cause coronary heart disease (CHD) leading to heart attacks and stroke
- 12.5 million Americans suffer from CHD and more than 500,000 die each year
- Estimated number of premature, preventable deaths each year attributed to the consumption of artificial trans fats is on the order of 30,000 to 100,000

What foods contain trans fat?

- They are often found in processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils like shortening, hard margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, and baked goods

What are the labeling requirements on food items?

- As of January 1, 2006, food manufacturers must list *trans* fat on the nutrition label
- The FDA requires the amount of trans fat in a serving to be listed on a separate line under saturated fat on the Nutrition Facts panel
- Manufacturers may list trans fat with less than 0.5 grams as 0 (zero)
- Trans fat will be listed only in gram amounts since daily values have not been established



Are there any health benefits?

- There are no known health benefits from consuming hydrogenated trans fat

Are all fats bad for me?

- Fat is a major source of energy for the body and aids in the absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids
- It is important for growth, development, and maintenance of good health
- Fat provides taste, consistency, and stability

What actions can I take to lower my trans fat intake?

- Choose foods with lower saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol (check the nutrition facts)
- Replace saturated and trans fat with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats. These do not increase LDL and may provide some health benefits when eaten in moderation.
- Consider the use of vegetable oils (except coconut and palm kernel) and soft margarines (liquid, tub, or spray)
- Eat foods like fish that are lower in saturated fat instead of meat
- Limit foods high in cholesterol (liver, organ meats, egg yolks, full-fat dairy products)
- Choose foods low in saturated fat (1% dairy products, lean meats, fish, skinless poultry, whole grain foods, fruits, and vegetables)

Where can I get further information?

(Just type trans fat in the search box on the listed web site)

- www.cfsan.fda.gov
- www.americanheart.org
- www.diabetes.org

Educated consumers can make educated choices.